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SUBJECT: SINGAPORE INKS DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH VIETNAM

¶1. (U) Singapore and Vietnam signed a Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) during a September 7-10 visit to Vietnam by Singapore Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Teo Chee Hean. The DCA will formalize existing mil-mil interactions, which have focused mainly on exchanges and study visits, and will promote new cooperation in the areas of military medicine and personnel education and training. Singapore has DCAs with a number of countries in addition to Vietnam, including Australia, China, India and New Zealand. While in Vietnam, DPM Teo met with Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai, Minister of Defence Phung Quang Thanh and Commission of Inspection Chairman Nguyen Van Chi.

¶2. (SBU) MFA Southeast Asia Deputy Director Peter Tan told EP Counselor that Singapore regards Vietnam as an increasingly important partner in the region. Good news consistently flows from Vietnam, Tan added. Singapore has only recently begun to intensify political and military links with Vietnam, building on successful economic ties, Tan said.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Singapore's decision to deepen engagement with Vietnam fits with Singapore's posture of reaching out and engaging regional powers with the hope that such interactions could lessen the possibility of conflict and increase economic opportunities. Singapore also openly strives to ensure a balance of power in the region, and has sought increased cooperation with not only Vietnam, but also China, India, Indonesia and the United States.

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